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SUBJECT: IRAQ ELECTIONS OCV: VOTER TURNOUT UP ON DAY TWO IN JORDAN

Ref: A) AMMAN 9630 B) AMMAN 9513

INCREASED VOTER TURNOUT

1. (SBU) Voter turnout increased noticeably on December 14, the second of three days of Iraqi election Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) in Jordan. Amman-based Independent Election Commission of Iraq (IECI) OCV chief Hamdia al-Husseini told Emboff at 4:00PM that voter turnout is running about fifty percent above that on day one (reported Ref A), which concluded with over 7,000 votes cast.

2. (SBU) Embassy Amman election observer teams visited 11 of the 13 OCV polling sites in Jordan December 14, and confirmed the apparent modest turnout increase. Embassy observers found polling operations proceeding smoothly, professionally, and without incident, in an overall atmosphere that was generally business-like. Embassy teams again noted the presence at polling stations of other observers, some from the UN, human rights NGOs, the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE), and many Iraqi political parties.

POSSIBLE MINOR IRREGULARITIES AT SOME OCV SITES

3. (SBU) Embassy observers reported seeing the arrival and departure of mini-vans festooned with political posters featuring Iyad Allawi, Saleh Mutlak, and Tariq Hashemi in the vicinity of several Amman polling sites. According to some Iraqi election staff, the vans were transporting would-be voters to the polls. While not illicit by itself, one Iraqi journalist working for the Manchester Guardian told Embassy observers that he had "infiltrated" one such group, which he claimed consisted of paid voters. He did not provide any further information, and Embassy is unaware of other information substantiating this allegation.

4. (SBU) At a second site, Embassy observers overheard one voter complaining to IECI staff that two men were standing outside the entrance to the polling center taking down the names of entering voters. Embassy observers were unable to confirm this claim. At a third site, Embassy observers witnessed a large group of men apparently attempting to vote twice. They were caught, as some still had vestiges of purple ink showing, and others had put some cream on their fingers to repel the ink. The group was not permitted to vote, and left the site.

APPARENT VOTER CONFUSION

5. (SBU) One IECI site manager told Embassy observers that several voters at his site said that they wanted to vote for a specific person or group (e.g., "the Shi'ites"), but could not find it on the ballot. The manager predicted semi-seriously that a large number of small parties may be the unintended beneficiaries of such voter confusion, contending that some frustrated voters ultimately marked their ballots at random.

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